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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001904

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: TIMING FOR NEW PARLIAMENT, NEW GOVERNMENT,  
NEW PRESIDENT

REF: ANKARA 1875

Classified By: A/Political Counselor Kelly Degnan for reasons 1.4(b),(d)  
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¶1. (C) Summary and comment. Official results of Turkey's July 22 general election are expected July 26, starting the clock for setting up the new parliament, forming a new government and electing the next president. If all goes smoothly -- a big "if" -- parliament could complete the process by late September. PM Erdogan has indicated he wants the new president to approve the new cabinet, which would make parliament's first order of business the presidential election rather than approving a new government. Others, including FM Gul who has not renounced presidential aspirations, see no need to rush the election and may push forming a government to the top of parliament's agenda. The mixed messages and intense speculation over possible candidates are prolonging the political uncertainty and tension that most Turks hoped would end after the parliamentary election. End summary and comment.

¶2. (U) Based on official results being announced on July 26, events could unfold pursuant to the following earliest-possible timeline. Some of these events may take longer to conclude, depending on the extent of debate and tactical maneuvering by parties.

-- July 26: Official results announced.

-- July 31: Parliament convenes (5 days after results announced); MPs are sworn in; nominations for Speaker are submitted for five days; earliest date for President Sezer to appoint a prime minister to form a government. Once Sezer passes the mandate, a government must be formed within 45 days or new elections may be called. Traditionally, the president appoints the leader of the strongest party as PM, although that is not required.

-- August 1: Earliest date for new PM to submit his list of ministers for parliament's approval. If Erdogan is appointed PM, he may delay doing this until after the presidential election.

-- August 2: Earliest date for PM to read the new government program to parliament. This must occur within a week of forming the Council of Ministers (which could be delayed until after the presidential election).

-- August 4: Nominations for Speaker close. The Speaker

must be elected within 5 days of nominations closing. Few expect fireworks over choosing the new Speaker, although speculation is rife. One rumour contends ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has cut a deal to back a Nationalist Action Party (MHP)-preferred Speaker candidate in exchange for MHP support in the presidential contest. Possible AKP contenders include Vecdi Gonul, Cemil Cicek and Koksak Toptan.

-- August 5: Earliest vote on Speaker (by August 9 at the latest).

-- August 5: Earliest debate on new government program could begin (two full days after PM reads his program to parliament).

-- August 7: Earliest date for vote of confidence on new government (one full day after debate ends).

-- September 19: Last date for forming new government, assuming Speaker is elected August 5 (45 days after Speaker and Speaker's council are approved). If the Speaker is elected August 9, the government must be formed by September 23.

#### Presidential Sweepstakes

13. (C) Given Erdogan's battles with President Sezer over numerous high-level appointments, the PM may not want Sezer to have final say over his new Cabinet. He may move to elect the president before forming a new government to ensure the Cabinet's smooth approval. Under this scenario, the election process could begin following the Speaker's election, as

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early as August 5 or August 9. A president must be elected within 30 days of initiating the process, making September 4 or 8 deadlines for completing an election launched August 5 or 9. Parliament would then have to approve the cabinet and government program by September 19 or 23, 45 days after the Speaker's election.

14. (C) Others prefer to delay the presidential election until after a new government is in place. FM Gul, who is still a presidential contender, told a July 25 press conference that there should be no rush to elect the president; the main political parties need time to evaluate their positions. Some AKPers want to hold off until after the October 21 referendum on electing the president by popular vote. They fear the referendum measure will be invalidated on procedural grounds if a new parliament elects the president, although they are not anxious to have Sezer remain in office any longer than necessary.

15. (C) AKP reportedly is heavily lobbying MHP and independent deputies for support once the election gets underway. With 341 seats, AKP needs 26 additional MPs to meet the 367 quorum required to start the voting and elect a candidate in the first and second rounds. MHP leader Devlet Bahceli told the press his party's 70 deputies will attend the session, and acknowledged that this would allow AKP to vote its candidate in on the third round, when only 184 (absolute majority) votes are required. Pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) imposed a gag order on the 22 DTP-affiliated MPs until after a July 30 party meeting but has given some indication its MPs will attend.

16. (C) As to who will run, Erdogan has stated he will not and Gul implies he must; the people would not accept his withdrawing his candidacy. Current Speaker Bulent Arinc and State Minister Besir Atalay recently reiterated that Gul is still the best man for the job, a sentiment felt by many AKP supporters. Erdogan, who must now please new centrist AKP deputies who favor a smooth, uncontentious process, continues to back Gul unless Gul chooses to withdraw. While Gul clearly sees himself as a contender, he has said the views of

the opposition and the millions who participated in the pro-secular rallies must be considered. CHP argues Gul's nomination will cause social and institutional tensions to continue, and is pushing for a candidate from outside parliament. The military has been silent so far. Erdogan has assured the public that AKP will avoid further tension over the issue but early indications are that this will be another noisy display of Turkish democracy in action.

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